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ABSTRACT

The paper provides summaries of three presentations entitled: "Family and Parent Variables Affecting Outcomes of a Parent Mediated Intervention" (S. Rosenberg and C. Robinson), "The Home as Learning Environment: Using Food Activities to Develop Reading Skills" (R. Handel), and "A Behavior Management Technique for Maladjusted Teenagers in a Public School: From Research to Practice" (J. Stables). (SBH)

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"Family and Parent Variables Affecting Outcomes of a Parent Mediated Intervention"

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Evidence documenting the utility of having parents implement behavior management and cognitive training programs for their own children has accumulated over the past severals years. Interventions in which parents are involved have been shown to substantially enhance child cognitive development and produce longer lived effects than interventions that do not involve parents. Unfortunately at the same time that these successes were being documented, instances in which parents failed to acquire the skills needed for the implementation of programs and instances in which parents failed to utilize their new learning were also being reported. At this point a substantial number of variables have been implicated in parent program failures. Consequently there is a need for a system that organizes these variables into manageable groupings that are accessable to study and intervention.

In this paper we will present evidence that four variables, commitment, consensus, resources and boundary permeability subsume many of the variables reported to influence the outcomes of parent interventions. Commitment is defined as a decision by family members to work for the attainment of a particular goal. Resources refers both to the emotional and physical resources required if family members are to be able to

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maintain themselves and solve new problems as they arise. Consensus refers to the agreements among family members regarding the nature of their goals, the allocation of responsibilities and the coordination of their efforts. The fourth variable is boundary permeability. Families must maintain control over their internal affairs if they are to survive as a unit. At the same time the family must remain open to the information and materials that are required for it's survival. Together these four variables constitute a framework that draws together several variables that are hypothesized to be determinants of parent performance of program activities and of child development.

The findings of a study that evaluated the relationships of commitment, consensus, resources and boundary permeability to the outcomes of parent programs and to their relative potencies in predicting those outcomes will be discussed. The results of this study indicate that commitment accounts for a substantial portion of the variance associated with outcomes of the parent mediated intervention. These findings are interpreted to suggest that commitment is a variable that is highly related to parent performance and child development.

"The Home as Learning Environment: Using Food Activities to Develop Reading Skills"

Dec. 1977

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The importance of the home as a supportive environment for cognitive development is well documented by research and is broadly recognized in United States government policy calling for parent participation in various federally sponsored programs. Practitioners in the fields of special education and reading disabilities have long been aware of the benefits of parental assistance with the learning process, as well as possible pitfalls. In the belief that special education in the future, just as education in general, will increasingly utilize the services of parents both in and outside the classroom, a systematic program for using food activities to develop reading skills has been formulated.

Food activities include the basic household functions of food preparation and storage, menu-planning, shopping, and of course eating. Reading materials include such familiar household items as advertisements, food labels, signs, menus and recipes. The advantage for parents, who consider these activities and materials within their natural area of competance, is that they will be more comfortable and capable participants in their children's education. In addition, since routine household occasions are utilized for teaching cognitive skills, parents are not burdened by undue demands on their time; indeed they welcome the opportunity to

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help their children in an enjoyable fashion. For the children, the program connects with their universal enthusiasm for food and eating, and has affective as well as cognitive outcomes. Finally, the content of the program stresses functional, real-life reading skills, designed to develop functional literacy and independent living.

The program ranges from reading readiness to fifth grade reading level and emphasizes the instructional categories of listening and following oral directions; visual discrimination and learning the alphabet; phonic skills; word recognition; following written directions; and expanding interest in reading. For example, on the readiness level such common household sounds as water falling from the tap or the "pop" of a toaster are used to develop attentive listening skills. A sequence of sounds (the refrigerator door opening and closing, the"clink"of a bowl set down before a child who has eyes closed) becomes a listening game with a tasty payoff. Letter and word recognition are taught by studying labels on cans and packages during the course of food preparation or shopping. Newspaper ads may be used for tracing words or for cutting out words to make a shopping list. Such reading comprehension skills as sequencing and cause and effect are involved in food preparation and recipe reading.

All activities are practical applicationsof learning theories in the fields of reading and learning disabilities, and may be keyed to reinforce classroom instruction. The program is set out in detail in Handel, Ruth D. and Marvin Spiegelman, THE READER IN THE KITCHEN:USING FOOD ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP CHILDREN'S READING,1976 (available from Educational Performance Associates, 563 Westview Avenue, Ridgefield, N.J.07657, $3.95).

"A Behavior Management Technique for Maladjusted Teen-Agers in a Public School: From Research to Practice"

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Parent participation, School behavior management, Positive reinforcement

Summary:

A difficult part in changing the maladjusted child's academic and social behavior is not only changing his self-concept, but to change the parents' concept of the child.

A project done with Roger Kroth and Richard J. Whelan (1970) used a daily report card to the parents. The subjects being taught were recorded on the card as the percentage of problems worked correctly, and the social behavior was reported as a percentage score. The system was discussed in a parent meeting, and with their acceptance, they were instructed in graphing procedures and methods of applying rewards for growth. In areas the parents chose to reinforce, the children showed more growth than they did in areas not reinforced.

A daily record sheet was developed to reinforce the child for his good behavior. It consists of three parts. The first part is points given for beginning on time, bringing materials to class, completing tasks assigned, and good behavior. The second part has a place for a child to list inappropriate behaviors which occurred, and beside them a list of acceptable alternatives. The third part of the sheet provides for a summary sentence describing what kind of a day he had.

Time is set aside at the end of the day for the child to figure his grades. With the teacher, the grades are recorded and then the card for the parent is filled out.

The objective is for the child to know what is appropriate and that he be reinforced daily for his good behavior both by his teacher and his parents.